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RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1090
RUEHDL/AMEMBASSY DUBLIN 508
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1149
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0229
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TASHKENT 000508

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [UZ](#)

SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH DIRECTOR STILL WAITING FOR
ACCREDITATION

REF: A. 07 TASHKENT 1345

[1](#)B. TASHKENT 465

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Classified By: POLOFF R. FITZMAURICE FOR REASONS 1.4 (B, D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: More than two months after applying for accreditation with the Ministry of Justice, Human Rights Watch Director Igor Vorontsov still has not received any indication from the Ministry on whether he will be accredited or not. According to a Cabinet of Ministers resolution from 2003, the Ministry is supposed to provide a decision on accreditation within one month of receiving an application. Vorontsov told poloff that he is content to wait for a decision until May, at which point he plans to force the government's hand by increasing his activities. In the meanwhile, Vorontsov's travel to the regions has been largely unrestricted. We believe that it is possible that the government might be waiting until after the European Union's formal decision on whether to sustain or not a suspension of visa sanctions against selected Uzbek officials before making a decision in Vorontsov's case. We will continue to raise Vorontsov's accreditation in our discussions with government officials. End summary.

NEITHER ACCREDITATION NOR EXPLANATION FORTHCOMING

[1](#)2. (C) Vorontsov originally applied for accreditation with the Justice Ministry on February 19. According to Vorontsov, the Ministry is obliged to provide a decision on accreditation within one month of receiving an application. Vorontsov forward to poloff an extract from Cabinet of Ministers Resolution number 543 from December 2003, which states that the Ministry of Justice is to issue a personal accreditation card within one month of receiving an application (Note: The Embassy's Legal Affairs FSN verified that this resolution is still in effect and agreed with Vorontsov's interpretation of it. End note.) Vorontsov has

repeatedly called the Ministry for explanation, but he has been told nothing except that his application remains pending.

13. (SBU) Human Rights Watch, which remains registered in Uzbekistan, was forced to temporarily close its doors in Tashkent in July 2007 after its last remaining expatriate staff member was denied accreditation (ref A). The office reopened with Vorontsov's arrival in February. As a Russian citizen, Vorontsov did not need a visa to enter Uzbekistan, but he still needs to receive accreditation to continue working in the country. While awaiting his accreditation, Vorontsov has limited some of his activities in Uzbekistan. For example, he has refrained from talking directly to the press or monitoring trials, and has somewhat limited his travels around the country.

"SILENCE IS ACCEPTANCE"

14. (C) On April 21, poloff asked Vorontsov for his thoughts on the Dutch government's proposal to tie in concrete EU sanctions and Vorontsov's accreditation (ref B). Vorontsov was ambivalent, saying HRW was content to wait until the EU made its own decision. He added that, sometime in May, if accreditation is not forthcoming, HRW has decided he will just start acting as if he is accredited and see what happens. Referring to the Ministry of Justice's lack of responsiveness, Vorontsov quoted the Russian saying that "silence is acceptance."

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH TRAVELS TO THE REGIONS

15. (C) During the week of March 31st, Vorontsov and Sasha Petrov (the former deputy director of HRW's Moscow office, and now a HRW consultant) traveled for several days to Jizzakh, Samarkand, and the Ferghana Valley to meet with

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activists who had been recently amnestied and released from prison. Since he lacked accreditation, Vorontsov anticipated that authorities might try to interfere with his travel. However, he noted that authorities largely did not interfere with the trip, and he was able to meet with five of the six human rights activists who had been amnestied since February. Vorontsov said that he was unable to get in contact with Andijon-based activist Gulbahor Turayeva, and speculated that she might be seeking to avoid contact with other human rights activists at the moment (Comment: Separately, poloff was told by another Andijon-based activist that Turayeva still appeared to be under heavy surveillance, despite her recent amnesty, but this has not been independently confirmed. End comment.)

RECENTLY AMNESTIED ACTIVISTS IN NEED OF ASSISTANCE

16. (C) Vorontsov reported to poloff that the health of three of the recently amnestied activists - Saidjahan Zaybiddinov, Bobomurod Mavlanov, and Ulugbek Kattabekov - had suffered in prison, and that they were in need of medical assistance. Poloff has already submitted an application to provide medical assistance to Zaybiddinov, and will provide applications for Kattabekov and Mavlanov as soon as he is able to gather the necessary information.

COMMENT

17. (C) As Vorontsov himself has speculated to poloff, it is possible that the Uzbek government is determined to wait on Vorontsov's accreditation until after the European Union decides (perhaps on April 29) on whether it will continue a suspension of the visa prohibition on selected Uzbek officials. Now that it looks likely that the EU will

announce a continuation of the suspension of the ban, it is possible, though far from certain, that Vorontsov will receive a positive response on accreditation shortly. We sincerely hope that the Uzbeks do not intend to delay a decision on Vorontsov's accreditation until late June, when the United States will consider whether to implement its own visa ban against selected Uzbek officials. We will continue to urge the Uzbeks to grant Vorontsov accreditation in our discussions with government officials, and our delegation at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) also discussed the issue during a private meeting with the Uzbek Charge to the OSCE on April 28. Other diplomatic missions, including the Germans, have weighed in with the government to accredit Vorontsov.

NORLAND